Bishop Absence Went Uninvestigated a Week

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By Donald P. Baker
Washington Post Staff Writer

Bradford Bishop Jr. left his office at the State Department on March 1 about 5:30 p.m.—early for him—complaining that he had the flu.

But in the following seven days, his co-workers in an international trade section at State never called Bishop to inquire about his health, even after worried neighbors called the office and said no one was answering the phone in the foreign service officer's home in Bethesda.

Finally, last Monday, one of the neighbors called the Montgomery County police and reported the family as missing. Within four hours, it was learned that Bishop's wife, mother and three sons had been dead one week—murdered in their home and driven to a swamp in North Carolina for a fiery burial.

Lauri Morrow, who lives near the Bishop home in the Carderock Springs neighborhood of Bethesda, said she first called Bishop's office on Wednesday, March 3, after the Bishop's youngest son, Geoffrey, 5, failed for the second straight day to show up for her carpool to Bannockburn Nursery School.

Mrs. Morrow said Bishop's secretary otld her that Bishop had called in the day before (Tuesday), saying he still was sick.

A State Department spokesman said yesterday that no one at State has spoken to Bishop since he went home on March 1. He said records at State acknowledged that Mrs. Morrow called at 9:05 a.m. on March 3, but she said no one told her Bishop had called in the day before.

But Mrs. Morrow said she is certain of the statement. She repeated it to Montgomery County police earlier this week.

Mrs. Morrow also called Bishop's office again last Monday—a few hours before the murders were revealed—and again was told that Bishop was sick.

Mrs. Durrow said that during the first call she didn't mention that she had called the Bishop house and gotten no answer, or that another neighbor had looked in theBishop'sliving room window the day before because of their concern.

But last Monday, after another secretary told her only that Bishop had been "out all week with the flu," Mrs. Morrow said she told the woman that she had been calling the Bishop house and got no answer. "I said, 'didn't you speak to him at all last week?' and the secretary said no," Mrs. Morrow said.

The bodies had been found March 2 in desolate Tyrrell County, N.C., by a forest ranger who saw a fire that had been set in an apparent attempt to burn them. The identification came only last Monday, after the family was reported missing. Bishop himself remains missing.

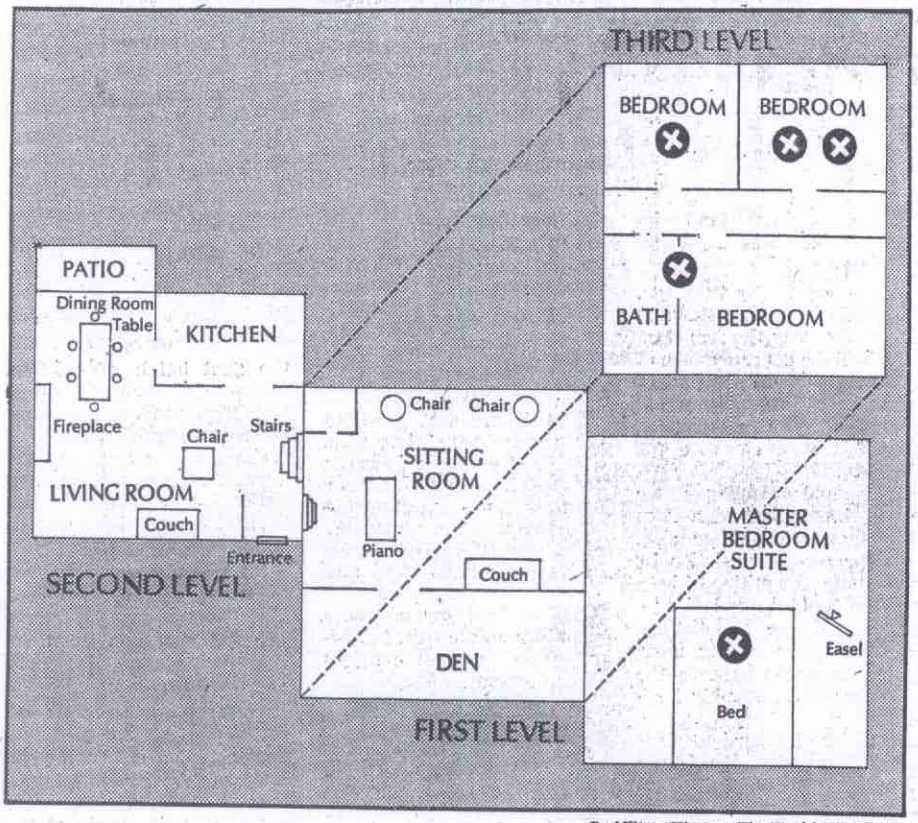
The victims were Bishop's wife, Annette, 37; his mother, Lovellia, 68, and sons Brad III, 14, Brent, 10, and Geoffrey, 5.

A state-owned helicopter flew again yesterday over the swampy area about 75 miles south of Norfolk, but found no trace of Bishop, the family's 1974 rust-colored Chevrolet station wagon, or their golden retriever, Leo.

Two Montgomery County detectives returned from North Carolina last night with some of the evidence found at the grave site, including tire prints and at least one clear fingerprint on the gasoline can.

Investigators in North Carolina said yesterday that head prints of the boys, who were wearing pajamas, were found on the pillows of their beds, and that another victim, believed to be Bishop's mother, Lovellia, was beaten to death in a bathroom.

Detectives apparently have not found sufficient evidence to issue a warrant in the slayings. No murder weapon has been found, although blood was found



By Milton Clipper—The Washington Post

X's mark places in Bishop home where police believe murders occurred.

throughout the house and along a trail to the driveway.

Two detectives inside the house yesterday were busy placing coverings at the windows. In the master bedroom suite they used a painting of a nude, perhaps one of Mrs. Bishop's to shield the view of curious reporters and children.